

The psychological dynamics of modern Russian society: an expert estimate

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Over the past several years, the possibilities for Russia's economic growth have been discussed widely. This problem is unquestionably topical. However, do material factors alone determine the well-being of a society and its people? Since the mid-1980s, the overwhelming majority of indicators of the psychological state of Russian society have been demonstrating a negative tendency, and this trend not only reflects on the citizens' sense of self but also creates obstacles on the way to the country's innovative development.

Keywords: modern Russian society, psychological state, social processes, society development, expert assessment

The methodology of modern social science and the humanities increasingly often employs social indicators based on aggregated quantitative assessments of different societal characteristics. The term *social indicators* was first used in the United States in the early 1960s. It was introduced on the initiative of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which was doing research for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In the 1970s, the U.S. government regularly published relevant data, and the *Social Indicators Research* journal was launched. International organizations undertook a similar approach. Interest in these data somewhat dropped in the 1980s but revived in the 1990s as a consequence of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Program by the international community; the program required the use of composite, rather than miscellaneous, social indicators, which would include different components of the indices (Stepashin, 2008). Social indicators are actively used by authoritative international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Statistical Office of the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, and the European Commission, and are applied by almost all European countries, as well as by the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, Latin American countries, and the Republic of South Africa.

Psychological components occupy an important place in the structure of social indicators. According to Osipov (2011), "The traditional approach was supplemen-

ted by the subjective one, which accounts for the psychological well-being of people; the concepts of life quality and functional abilities were formed” (p. 6). The indices of social moods, social health, social optimism, satisfaction with life, and others, which are calculated by sociologists, have a pronounced psychological component. Note that the primary components of these indices are also “psychologized” to a considerable extent. For example, the index of satisfaction with life, suggested by Balatskii (2005), includes creative self-realization and effective informal social contacts (friendship, communication, mutual understanding, sexual relations, and so on) as primary indicators. Other indices, such as, for example, a country’s vitality coefficient, used by demographers (Sulakshin, 2006), and indicators of quality of life and associated phenomena—subjective well-being and so on (Biderman, 1970; Keltner, Locke, & Audrian, 1993)—also directly relate to psychology. Such indices as the happy life index, the happy planet index, and the gross national happiness index (the latter coined by Bhutan’s fourth king and used in that country instead of the GDP index) make it possible to count the seemingly uncountable. These indices were generated in economic science, which, for example, developed happiness economics. In particular, “the dissatisfaction of economists with the explanatory potential of the profit maximization postulate led to posing the notion of *well-being* as the goal of economic activity, which replaced in this function the notion of *wealth*” (Osipov, 2011, p. 39). Well-being is usually understood as a state consisting of six factors: physical and psychological health, knowledge and understanding, work, material welfare, freedom and self-determination, and interpersonal relations (Lebedeva, 2000). One cannot but notice how deeply this notion, generated by economic science, is psychologized. Happiness economics largely inverts the traditional logic of economic and social assessments by shifting the focus to subjective well-being and assessing through it the quality of objective life conditions. It is believed that the main difference between “secondary” and “primary” modernization is to improve the quality of life and to satisfy people’s needs for happiness and self-expression rather than merely to develop the economy to meet people’s material requirements.

In psychological science itself, similar approaches are used for assessing the subjective quality of life; the psychological potential of a population (Zarakovskii, 2009); and social capital, which, in essence, has a social-psychological content (Tartarko, 2011). As G. M. Zarakovskii (2009) stresses, “Fundamentally important is the transfer from understanding the essence of the psychological potential of an individual to understanding the essence of the psychological potential of society” (p. 132).

The Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) has developed a composite index of the psychological state of society. The dynamics of the psychological state of modern Russia, elucidated on the basis of this index, have been considered earlier (Yurevich, 2009) and have been subjected to further analysis. These dynamics are shown in Figure 1.

In 2011, in the context of the typical social science—humanities orientation toward combining “rough” indices, which are calculated on the basis of statistical data, with poll results, the RAS Institute of Psychology conducted an expert survey targeted at elucidating the dynamics of the psychological state of our society. The experts were asked to assess these dynamics for 1981, 1991 (prior to the disinte-



Figure 1. The dynamics of the composite index of the psychological state of Russian society, 1990—2010, points

gration of the Soviet Union), 2001, and 2011 in a questionnaire. The assessment was based on 70 parameters, including 35 positive and 35 negative characteristics of society, which were selected in preliminary consultations with the experts. Not all these characteristics were purely psychological. Each parameter was assessed on a 10-point scale, on which mark 1 corresponded to the minimal expression of a particular characteristic and mark 10, to the maximal. The experts were 124 psychologists representing different regions and scientific-educational centers of our country and meeting the following requirements: age: an expert had to be able to assess the state of our society in 1981 (accordingly, young psychologists were not included); sufficiently high academic qualifications: a candidate's or a doctoral degree; a professional area relevant to macropsychological problems; and relevant publications.

The results (Table 1, Figure 2) appear unexpected even accounting for the generally pessimistic state of modern Russian society, which, to all appearances, extends to the experts as well. If we compare the characteristics on the two extreme points of the time continuum under consideration (1981 and 2011), we see that all negative parameters without exception grew, while the overwhelming majority of positive ones dropped. Only two positive parameters—rationalism and freedom—grew, but the positive dynamics appear ambiguous even in these two cases. Evidently, some of the respondents interpreted rationalism not as a positive characteristic of society but rather as a negative one that reflects its greediness and commercialism. The index of the level of freedom somewhat increased (0.4) owing to its spasmodic rise in 1991 (from 3.6 to 6.9) and subsequent drop.

The highest growth among negative characteristics was shown by aggressiveness, greediness, anomie, expediency, audacity, animosity, permissiveness, rudeness, cru-

Table 1. The dynamics of the psychological characteristics of Russian society at 10-year intervals from 1981 to 2011, points

Characteristics of the psychological atmosphere of Russian society	Value of the characteristics in points (1— min., 10 — max.)				Value change for the period 2011/1981	Value change for the period 1991/1981
	1981	1991	2001	2011		
1. Aggressiveness	3.30	5.45	6.55	7.23	3.93***	2.15*
2. Greediness	3.07	4.94	7.19	8.29	5.22***	1.87**
3. Altruism	5.97	5.48	3.32	2.61	-3.36***	-0.49
4. Anomie	4.28	4.73	6.23	6.90	2.62***	0.45
5. Apathy	6.13	3.23	5.35	7.10	0.97	-2.90***
6. Irresponsibility	4.93	5.4	6.43	6.63	1.70	0.47
7. Lack of ideology	4.90	3.97	6.23	7.03	2.13*	-0.93
8. Unselfishness	6.30	5.29	3.16	2.32	-3.98***	-1.01
9. Lawlessness	6.03	5.19	6.81	7.55	1.52	-0.84
10. Expediency	4.67	4.77	7.03	7.74	3.07***	0.10
11. Audacity	4.33	5.77	7.06	7.42	3.09***	1.44*
12. Mutual help	6.53	6.42	4.19	3.35	-3.18***	-0.11
13. Mutual understanding	6.43	5.87	4.26	3.71	-2.72***	-0.56
14. Mutual respect	5.83	5.19	3.71	3.06	-2.77***	-0.64
15. Animosity	3.23	5.26	6.42	7.26	4.03***	2.03**
16. Permissiveness	2.50	6.23	7.06	6.77	4.27***	3.73***
17. Rudeness	4.27	5.06	6.71	7.19	2.92***	0.79
18. Discipline	6.40	4.16	4.23	4.13	-2.27**	-2.24**
19. Conscientiousness	5.47	4.52	3.65	3.16	-2.31***	-0.95
20. Kindness	6.30	5.19	3.81	3.23	-3.07***	-1.11
21. Confidence	6.33	5.74	3.71	2.81	-3.52***	-0.59
22. Cruelty	3.63	5.45	6.74	7.48	3.85***	1.82*
23. Law-abidingness	6.27	4.32	3.55	3.39	-2.88***	-1.95**
24. Hostility	3.13	4.97	6.03	6.71	3.58***	1.84**
25. Intellectualism	6.73	6.32	4.19	3.48	-3.25***	-0.41
26. Delicateness	6.28	5.40	3.30	2.73	-3.55***	-0.88
27. Sincerity	5.37	6.13	4.10	3.13	-2.24**	0.76
28. Proneness to conflict	3.77	6.10	6.71	6.97	3.2***	2.33**
29. Creativity	5.60	6.39	5.16	4.26	-1.34	0.79
30. Xenophobia	3.20	4.10	6.35	7.32	4.12***	0.90
31. Refined behavior	6.77	5.71	4.00	3.48	-3.29***	-1.06
32. Mendacity	5.87	4.97	6.32	7.19	1.32	-0.90
33. Mafia-style behavior	3.40	5.81	7.84	8.00	4.6***	2.41**
34. Commercialism	3.53	4.52	7.29	8.32	4.79***	0.99
35. Courage	5.30	5.97	4.52	3.94	-1.36	0.67
36. Impudence	3.43	5.35	7.00	7.65	4.22***	1.92*

Characteristics of the psychological atmosphere of Russian society	Value of the characteristics in points (1— min., 10 — max.)				Value change for the period 2011/1981	Value change for the period 1991/1981
	1981	1991	2001	2011		
37. Reliability	6.45	4.87	3.53	3.03	-3.42***	-1.58*
38. Tension	3.13	6.77	6.23	6.77	3.64***	3.64***
39. Violence	3.27	5.58	6.87	7.29	4.02***	2.31**
40. Bad manners	4.23	5.19	6.74	7.16	2.93***	0.96
41. Hatred	2.97	5.06	6.00	6.90	3.93***	2.09*
42. Lack of cooperation	4.47	5.68	6.29	6.81	2.34**	1.21
43. Good morals	6.21	5.33	3.73	3.03	-3.18***	-0.88
44. Optimism	5.27	6.9	4.52	3.16	-2.11**	1.63**
45. Responsiveness	6.33	5.71	3.90	3.03	-3.3***	-0.62
46. Patriotism	6.83	5.97	3.87	3.29	-3.54***	-0.86
47. Meanness	3.66	4.60	6.23	6.53	2.87***	0.94
48. Suspiciousness	4.10	4.40	5.60	6.10	2.0*	0.3
49. Decency	6.14	4.90	3.73	2.93	-3.21***	-1.24
50. Psychological safety	6.53	4.35	3.61	2.61	-3.92***	-2.18**
51. Excessive talkativeness	7.27	6.9	6.81	7.68	0.41	-0.37
52. Brashness	3.77	5.68	6.23	6.42	2.65**	1.91*
53. Rationalism	4.30	4.29	5.03	5.71	1.41*	-0.01
54. Self-control	5.45	3.97	4.13	4.40	-1.05	-1.48*
55. Freedom	3.60	6.90	4.97	4.00	0.40	3.3***
56. Ribald language	4.03	5.37	6.77	7.33	3.3***	1.34
57. Modesty	6.55	4.63	3.27	2.70	-3.85***	-1.92*
58. Sympathy	6.57	5.52	3.90	3.13	-3.44***	-1.05*
59. Calmness	6.93	3.61	3.52	3.35	-3.58***	-3.32***
60. Justice	4.37	4.19	2.77	2.45	-1.92*	-0.18
61. Fear	3.17	5.48	6.03	6.42	3.25**	2.31*
62. Tactfulness	5.38	4.03	3.27	2.77	-2.61***	-1.35*
63. Anxiety	3.50	6.13	6.32	6.94	3.44***	2.63**
64. Diligence	5.90	4.81	4.10	3.68	-2.22**	-1.09
65. Familiarity	3.45	5.4	5.87	5.83	2.38***	1.95***
66. Boorishness	4.21	5.67	6.70	7.07	2.86**	1.46
67. Civility	5.47	4.68	4.13	4.13	-1.34	-0.79
68. Humaneness	6.66	5.47	3.83	3.20	-3.46***	-1.19*
69. Honesty	5.67	4.94	3.61	3.06	-2.61***	-0.73
70. Selfishness	4.17	5.16	7.23	8.03	3.86***	0.99

Note. $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

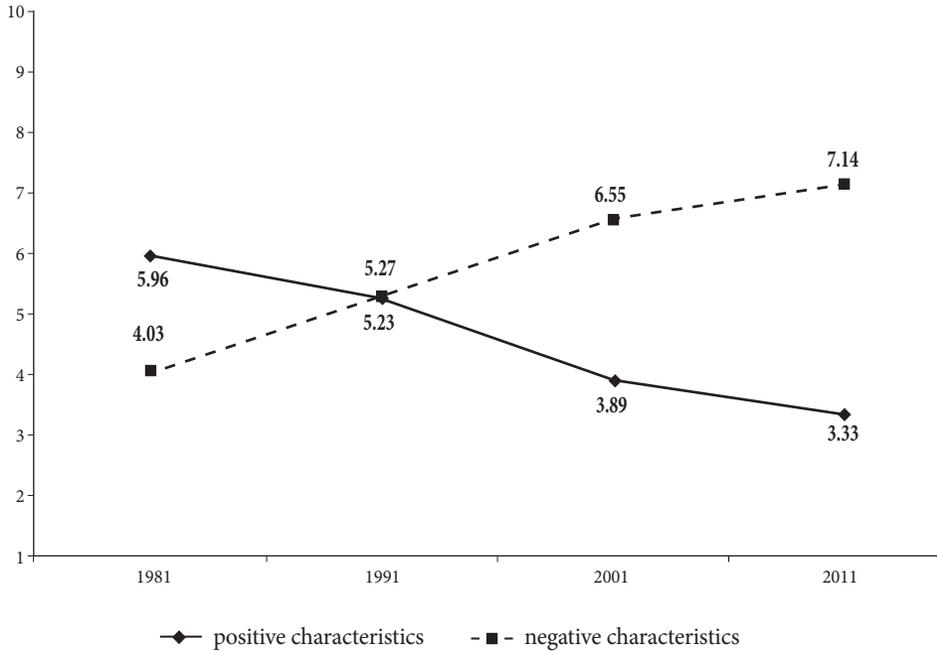


Figure 2. Aggregate dynamics of the positive and negative psychological characteristics of Russian society at 10-year intervals from 1981 to 2011, points

elty, hostility, proneness to conflict, xenophobia, mendacity, mafia-style behavior, commercialism, impudence, tension, violence, bad manners, hatred, meanness, ribald language, anxiety, familiarity, and selfishness. Note that greediness (5.22), commercialism (4.79), and mafia-style behavior (4.6) had the highest growth.

In absolute values, the following negative characteristics of our society stand out: aggressiveness, greediness, apathy, the lack of ideology, lawlessness, expediency, audacity, animosity, rudeness, cruelty, xenophobia, mendacity, mafia-style behavior, commercialism, impudence, violence, bad manners, excessive talkativeness, ribald language, boorishness, and selfishness; those with the highest expression are commercialism (8.32), greediness (8.29), and selfishness (8.03).

The most significant losses among positive characteristics are observed in altruism, unselfishness, mutual help, mutual understanding, mutual respect, conscientiousness, kindness, confidence, law-abidingness, intellectualism, delicateness, refined behavior, reliability, good morals, patriotism, decency, psychological safety, modesty, sympathy, calmness, tactfulness, honesty, and humaneness. The most significant difference between the values of 1981 and 2011 is observed in unselfishness (3.98), psychological safety (3.92), and modesty (3.85). The experts assessed only one positive parameter higher than the average level (5.7), but, as was mentioned, this parameter (rationalism) was, most likely, perceived ambiguously and was not interpreted as an unquestionably positive characteristic. True, some positive parameters were assessed close to the average level: discipline (4.13), creativity (4.26), self-control (4.4), freedom (4.0), and civility (4.13). For a number of characteristics, changes in the psychological state of Russian society were assessed by the experts

as linear, mainly as a gradual deterioration from 1981 to 1991 and then to 2001 and 2011 (naturally, this does not exclude nonlinearity within respective 10-year intervals). Some characteristics, such as apathy, the lack of ideology, lawlessness, permissiveness, discipline, sincerity, creativity, mendacity, tension, courage, optimism, excessive talkativeness, rationalism, self-control, freedom, and familiarity, showed nonlinear dynamics. In the majority of such cases, the common picture of nonlinear changes in the characteristics included their improvement from 1981 to 1991 and subsequent deterioration. This trajectory corresponds to one of the main ways of perceiving the situation in Russian society: in 1991, our compatriots had hopes that later proved to be unjustified; as a result, the situation in 1991, despite its objective deplorableness (the lack of control over the country, clear signs of its nearing disintegration, the considerable deficit of staple commodities, and so on), appeared better than in it did in 2001 and 2011. In particular, in the opinion of the respondents, in 1991 we were less apathetic, lawless, and mendacious and more sincere, creative, courageous, optimistic, ideological, and free than in the preceding and subsequent periods.

At the same time, a number of characteristics, although their changes are nonlinear, do not comply with the “nostalgia for 1991.” For example, the level of discipline dropped from 1981 through 1991, then it somewhat increased by 2001 and then slightly decreased again. Tension was characterized as maximal in 1991, which is natural for the threshold of subsequent events; later it somewhat decreased but increased again by 2011 and reached the 1991 level. The level of excessive talkativeness was assessed as gradually decreasing from 1981 to 2001; however, by 2011 it had increased again and surpassed the 1981 level. The expression of self-control and rationalism had dropped by 1991 but then increased stage by stage. The civility of our society was assessed by the experts as consistently decreasing from 1981 to 2001 and then being “frozen” at quite a low level.

Factor analysis of the obtained data has elucidated four main factors that explain the dynamics of the positive characteristics of our society, namely amiability (explained variance is 22.9%), self-organization (18.7%), intellectual potential (17.8%), and passion (13%), and four factors that explain the dynamics of its negative characteristics, namely severity (31.9%), antisocial disposition (16.8%), lack of self-control (10.8%), and suffering (10.3%).

It makes sense to consider the obtained data from the point of view of the traditional question about what the country has lost (in the psychological context). The answer depends on the period in the history of our country to which we attribute this question: to the more or less quiet “epoch of stagnation” or to the much more turbulent years of disintegration. On the basis of the overwhelming majority of positive characteristics, the assessment of Soviet society in 1981 is higher than average, while on the basis of the larger part of negative characteristics, the assessment is lower than average; in other words, the experts picture the society of that period as chiefly psychologically safe. At the same time, notwithstanding its basically safe nature, it is assessed as rather apathetic, lawless, restricted, unjust, irrational, and prone to excessive talkativeness. Our society of 1981 appears positive primarily because many negative characteristics (such as greediness, commercialism, permissiveness, aggressiveness, hostility, cruelty, proneness to conflict, xenophobia, mafia-style behavior, impudence, hatred, tension, meanness, brashness, familiarity, animosity, vio-

lence, anxiety, and fear) were expressed relatively infrequently. In total, our society of that time may be characterized as kind, calm, and uncommercial.

As for the psychological state of society in 1991, it appears transitional, from “kind” to “hostile.” Compared with the society of 1981, its positive characteristics largely acquire lower values, while the negative ones become higher. Overall, parameters of both types show average values, from 4 to 5; more radical assessments are rare. Thus, psychologically, Russian society is not characterized as “kind” compared with 1981, but it is not characterized as “hostile” either if we compare it with later periods. The most expressed negative shifts compared with 1981 are observed in tension, calmness, permissiveness, and familiarity. At the same time, a number of parameters (apathy, a lack of ideology, lawlessness, sincerity, creativity, mendacity, excessive talkativeness, courage, optimism, and freedom) show improvement. Our society in 1991, compared with its state in 1981, is characterized as more creative, freer, and more optimistic, findings that need no commentary. In the context of the comparison between 1981 and 1991, as drawn by the experts, note that the 1991 results relate to the prereform period. When viewed as an expression of objective reality, the expert assessments refute the popular notion that the radical deterioration of the psychological atmosphere in Russia was the result of the reforms, which are conventionally measured starting from 1991. In the opinion of the experts, cardinal psychological changes took place prior to the beginning of the reforms (although they continued later) and were the product of the sociopolitical, economic, and macropsychological processes that began to develop earlier than the 1990s. Indeed, obvious symptoms of the beginning of the country’s disintegration, the aggravation of interethnic relations, criminalization and the legalization of criminal relations, the degradation of morale, and the rise of a new type of personality oriented to money and earning it by any means were evident already in the late 1980s, and the reforms of the early 1990s were actively supported by the population because they were perceived as a way to overcome this situation. Also, a significant rise in the feeling of freedom took place by 1991—that is, under Soviet power; later it began to wither.

In this context, it is useful to remember the suggestion of many famous sociologists (for example, Kimmel, 1990) that, contrary to Marxist logic, revolutions and other radical social reforms are reactions to reforms of the preceding period gone awry rather than to the absence of changes (“stagnations” of various types). At the same time, it is necessary to take into account that society always has a choice at such bifurcation points. Although the ideologists of domestic reforms, particularly Gaidar (2007), stressed time and again that our country had no choice in 1991 and that their actions were the only ones possible, it seems to us that in reality there were other, positive, options; later these options were recognized even by foreign adherents of radical market reforms, such as M. Friedman.

A similar vector of psychological changes in Russian society was noted by other researchers, including sociologists, who have been showing more and more interest in social-psychological characteristics, a development that is noteworthy. For example, in 2005, the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) posed the following question to its respondents: “How, in your opinion, have the qualities of people who surround you changed over the past 10 to 15 years?” In the opinion of the respondents, cynicism and the ability to force one’s way significantly

grew in our citizens, while unselfishness, patriotism, loyalty to comrades, amiability, warmheartedness, mutual confidence, honesty, and sincerity significantly decreased (VCIOM, 2005). In still another poll, the question “Do you think that you can trust the majority of people?” was answered in the affirmative by 34.7% of Russians in 1990, by 22.9% in 1999, and by approximately the same percentage in the 2000s (Yurevich, 2009). In fact, the level of interpersonal confidence decreased in the 1990s and then remained almost unchanged at quite a low level; this decrease was accompanied by a low level of trust in social institutions.

Similar changes have occurred in the value systems of our compatriots. Based on their study, Sochivko and Polyanin characterize the social—psychological atmosphere in modern Russia in the following way (2009, p. 183):

Our country is in the state that Durkheim termed “anomie,” which explains the emergence of many of today’s social problems, such as the crisis of moral and legal consciousness, social instability, political disorientation and demoralization of the population, the fall in the value of human life and the loss of its meaning, an existential vacuum, cynicism, and value and legal nihilism. As a consequence, we observe the growth of aggressive and criminal tendencies, progressing alienation, high anxiety, and the deformation of legal consciousness among the young.

There are significant differences between the value systems of different social groups, primarily between the young—children of the 1990s and 2000s, whose personalities were formed in those years—and the “Soviet” generations. (No doubt, the conflict of generations in one form or another exists in every society, but its extreme forms are also a symptom of a society’s psychological ill-being.) For example, a study by Lebedeva (2002) shows that the priority values for modern Russian college students are independence, self-respect, freedom, obtaining success, and an independent choice of goals, while their professors place a priority on responsibility, social and national order, global peace, honesty, and respect for senior citizens. Large differences between the value systems of the generations were also detected by other authors (Magun & Rudnev, 2012; Zarakovskii, 2009). The contemporary young generation is forming its own moral code, within which aggressiveness, for example, is a positive quality, while impudence, swagger, and permissiveness are united under the positive notion of “relaxedness.” However, it is difficult to find an objection to the statement “like society, like the young” (Sochivko & Polyanin, 2009, p. 200), as well as to the assertion that “it is impossible to hope for an effective cultural self-realization of the young generation in an ill society” (p. 202).

The interpretation of our data centers around two fundamental possibilities (and their combination). The first is to consider that the dynamics of Russia’s psychological state are objectively presented by the expert psychologists. In this case, one has to recognize that these dynamics are overall negative: the psychological state of modern Russian society is highly unsatisfactory; our society is largely aggressive, apathetic, lacking convictions, lawless, unprincipled, presumptuous, unfriendly, rude, cruel, xenophobic, mendacious, impudent, prone to violence, ill mannered, prone to talking excessively, foul-mouthed, and boorish; and the most pronounced negative characteristics of modern Russian society are greediness, commercialism, and egoism. Naturally, one should express the reservation that even if we recognize the impartiality of this characteristic, “society as a whole” is an abstraction, and the elucidated picture is of a generalized nature and does not

account for the differences among individuals and among various social groups that constitute any real society.

The second fundamental possibility for interpreting the obtained data is to consider the factors that may have shifted the expert assessment toward a negative perception. However, not all psychological effects that can influence expert assessments (nostalgia and so on) necessarily act in this direction. For example, the well-being of many respondents in 2011 was surely higher than in 1981 and 1991, and they enjoyed attributes of well-being (apartments, cars, dachas, and so on) that they had lacked before. As a result, the effects of conjoining psychological and socioeconomic assessments and attributing a general sense to the personal situation can lead to an optimistic rather than a negative picture of events.

Projecting the personal to the general unquestionably takes place. For example, many, if not all, respondents happened to be the targets of boorishness, aggression, lack of conscientiousness, and other negative phenomena, and they projected their personal experience onto their estimation of the society. However, there was no guarantee against such events in Soviet times either, and having general assessments proceed from personal experience is quite an objective way of forming them. True, we may assume that a recent negative experience has a stronger influence on such assessments than do distant experiences (30, 20, 10 years ago); however, it is difficult to explain in this case why recent positive experiences have no similar effect. Possibly, the assessment in this case is similar to that made of previous changes by some journalists and public figures: "Life has become objectively better but more disgusting." Maybe, sensibility to and requirements for the psychological atmosphere in society grow as material needs are satisfied. We should also bear in mind that, as the educational level grows, satisfaction with different aspects of subjective well-being usually drops, while criticism increases (Osipov, 2011).

Such suppositions confirm the following well-known fact: when basic material needs are not satisfied, people focus just on those needs, and psychological problems are pushed into the background. However, when the material requirements of the larger part of the population are overall satisfied, social and psychological, rather than economic, problems come to the fore; this explanation organically complies with A. Maslow's theory of motivation and Deci and Ryan's theories of needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which are based on analogous logic. In this situation, the deficit of life strategies (in particular, the absence of a distinct national idea) in the majority of the population, which may lead to mass dissatisfaction, gains great importance.

Zarakovskii (2009) is of the opinion that "the quality of life depends more on the presence of personality growth and life meaning than on the satisfaction of basic needs" (p. 105). On the basis of quantitative analysis, he formulates the following conclusion (p. 110):

The largest contribution to the generalized index of satisfaction with life is made not by "material" but rather by "psychophysiological" factors (family relations, friendship, communication, personal and family safety, and personal and family members' health). The least contribution is made by the following factors: the economic and political situation in the country, creative self-realization in the workplace and outside of it, the social infrastructure, and the environmental situation.

Very topical also is Zarakovskii's observation that, from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, the incidence of stressor-caused diseases (blood-circulation and di-

gestive-tract disorders) in our country increased significantly. The author explains this phenomenon by citing two possibilities: the increase was caused either by a discrepancy in adaptation to the situation at the conscious and unconscious levels or by the psychophysiological costs of an increasingly active lifestyle (particularly multiple employment), caused by the necessity of adapting to new economic conditions.

In this context, studies that demonstrate the absence of a direct connection between the quantitatively measured level of happiness and the subjective quality of life, on the one hand, and material well-being, on the other, are noteworthy. According to data from a Swedish company, World Values Survey, the top places with regard to the subjective quality of life are Venezuela and Nigeria, while rich Western countries are far behind (Stepashin, 2008). The majority of developed countries have very low indicators; for example, on the happy planet index, the G8 members are distributed in the following way: Italy occupies the 66th place in the world; Germany, the 81st; Japan, the 95th; Great Britain, the 108th; Canada, the 111th; France, the 129th; the United States, the 150th; and Russia, the 172nd (Marks, Aballah, Simms, & Thompson, 2006).

Similar data were obtained by other surveys, which registered a paradoxical connection between the objective and the subjective quality of life (Diener & Suh, 1999). Well known are the Easterlin paradox and other similar phenomena that imply that subjective well-being is not proportional to the level of incomes because of the action of various mechanisms, such as, for example, the “hedonic circular chase” (in which growth of incomes is accompanied by growth in the level of demands). For instance, the level of incomes of U.S. citizens after World War II grew continually, while the share of people who thought themselves happy constantly decreased (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2000). In all countries where the index of sustainable economic welfare and the genuine progress indicator were measured, their values showed a nonlinear connection with GDP size; this finding gave rise to the so-called threshold hypothesis, which suggests that GDP and well-being grow in parallel up to a certain point, after which GDP growth is not accompanied by the growth of well-being (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2008). In some countries, for example, in Switzerland, an inverse connection between the size of incomes and the level of subjective well-being was observed.

All the above information does not mean either that the way to happiness for the Russian population is paved through its total impoverishment or that our country should focus on a noneconomic way to improve the welfare of its citizens. At the same time, accounting for subjective factors, first, forces us to an increasingly flexible understanding of the interrelationship between economic and psychological indicators and, second, serves as another refutation of “economic determinism,” which was espoused by domestic reformers of the early 1990s, who were convinced that the main point was to improve the economy, and all the rest would follow of its own accord. The subsequent years of Russia’s development and the experience of other countries convincingly show the following:

Economic advance is not accompanied automatically by social, political, and spiritual progress. A high level of material welfare in society is often accompanied by the growth of soullessness, immorality, and an increase in social deviations. ... Such categories as satisfaction with life, the quality of life, and the level of

human potential development are multifactorial and are not directly GDP dependent. (Osipov, 2011, p. 37)

In generalizing the obtained data and similar results of other researchers, it is useful to remember that when society becomes freer, not only the best but also the worst qualities in society, as well as in individuals, are liberated; this fact is often forgotten by reformers conducting liberal (or pseudoliberal) reforms without due caution. To all appearances, this was the experience in our society as well: it became more hostile, impudent, and presumptuous and acquired the other above-mentioned negative psychological characteristics. Let us once more recall that society as a whole is an abstraction, and some of its representatives became hostile, impudent, and so on, while others did not. But for those who did not yield to the negative tendencies, such changes in their environment led to a considerable deterioration of their psychological state (such as the loss of psychological safety). Strangely, however, our data show that some positive qualities that should seemingly have manifested themselves as a consequence of liberalization waned. For example, according to the expert assessments, intellectuality and creativity, which, as the experience of other countries shows, are usually stimulated by a market economy, decreased in our society. At the same time, this result is not unexpected if we take into consideration the specifics of the domestic version of the market economy, which was oriented toward speculation and raw materials rather than toward innovation; such an orientation does not place high requirements on intellect and creativity (although its characteristic machinations, such as, for example, building financial pyramids, requires a specific kind of creativity). The decrease in the level of perceived freedom after 1991 is not sensational either: if freedom combines with boorishness, unfriendliness, and impudence, it transforms into the freedom of boorishness (including the public use of ribald language), which has nothing to do with genuine, civilized freedom.

Even the possibility that the experts' negative perception of the psychological state of Russian society was the result of the improvement of the economic situation in the country does not make the problem less topical but rather necessitates its being posed in another plane. We have to recognize that positive changes in the economy do not lead automatically to improvement in the psychological state of society. In addition, improvements in well-being and general stabilization may not serve as a substitute for psychological comfort and often increase our sensitivity to its absence. When the economic situation improves, psychological problems come to the fore; solving them should therefore become a priority of government policy.

However, our power structures pay almost no attention to the psychological state of society. In particular Zarakovskii (2009, p. 275) notes the following:

The current national projects and other measures undertaken by power institutions will hardly become effective enough because they do not rest on actions targeted at improving the psychological quality of the population despite the fact that speeches of the Russian president and the program of the ruling United Russia party devote much space to the human being as the main driving force of socio-economic development.

At the same time, it would be incorrect and unjust to place the blame on the authorities alone without taking into account our own qualities, the degree to which we have endured the trials of freedom, and what exactly it liberated in us.

The outstanding Russian sociologist P. A. Sorokin, who emigrated from Russia to the United States in 1923, used to divide members of society into adherents of “creative altruism” and those who practiced aggressive egoism (Sorokin, 1992, p. 198). Judging from the data presented in this and other works, Russia is moving toward aggressive egoism from the point of view of the prevailing value systems and the share of personalities of this type. This change not only causes annoyance but also creates serious obstacles, which are clearly understated by the strategists of our reforms, on the way toward an innovation economy; such an economy requires that creative, rather than aggressively money-grubbing, orientations should dominate in society. Hence, one of the main preconditions of Russia’s innovative development is a radical change in the psychological state of our society.

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